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County Histories

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chan is a man of thorough education, especially noted for his knowledge of the Greek, Latin and French languages, the last of which he both writes and speaks. The first missionaries who came to Iowa were French Catholic priests, and Father Lenehan was accustomed often in his childhood to hear them preach in their native language. He is a lover of books, a man of large and varied information. *THE ANNALS* for January, 1899, contained a sketch of Rt. Rev. Mathias Loras, D. D., the first Bishop of Dubuque, from the pen of Father Lenehan. He was one of the Bishop's acolytes or altar boys, and wrote of him from intimate acquaintance. The article referred to attracted wide attention in this State and was commended in the *American Historical Review* of New York City. It is the hope of the editor of *THE ANNALS* that Father Lenehan's recollections of other early Iowa Catholic Missionaries will yet appear in these pages.

COUNTY HISTORIES.

Every state at some period has been afflicted with "County Histories" of a quite peculiar type. Very few of our Iowa counties have escaped "a run" of this sort of thing. They seem incidental to certain stages of human development—like stone axes or rail fences. A typical one is before us at the present writing, and is fairly representative of a large class of these works. About one half of the volume, of something over 600 pages, purports to be a "History of the Northwest Territory," and of the State of Iowa. This, considered as a mere outline, may suffice for people who have little time to read or search for historical facts. But on the part of the editors and publishers it became a sort of labor-saving affair, for the same matter, printed from the same plates, was used in many counties. It also helped swell the volumes to quite respectable proportions. The other half of the book was mostly devoted to the county upon which the publisher determined to carry out his designs—though portions of the matter were so prepared as to be available in almost any county. Then followed a brief "Biographical Directory," in which each of the inhabitants was mentioned—if they were subscribers to the high-priced work. If they paid something more their portraits appear

—usually poor lithographs, at very high figures. Unless the publisher or his canvassing agent was paid or profited in some way the names of but comparatively few citizens of the county were even mentioned. For the most part the men employed to “work up” a county possessed little education or fitness for literary employment. It was jocosely remarked of some of them that they had the biographical sketches stereotyped, so that they could easily take out the name of “Jones” and insert that of “Smith” or “Brown.” These books were seldom if ever indexed, and while it seems necessary to have them in all our State Historical Collections, it is by careful search only that one can find the data he may require, if indeed it happens to be there. As histories they are very crude and ill-digested affairs. But we are happily passing out of the period in which such enterprises naturally flourish, and better things may be looked for in this direction. Indeed, we now have a few county histories of decided merit. Earnest, painstaking workers have also arisen in several of our counties, who are gathering up the facts of local history and printing them in attractive, readable shape, either in the newspapers or in book form. Among these we take pleasure in mentioning Harvey Ingham of Kossuth county, R. E. Flickinger of Pocahontas, R. A. Smith of Dickinson, J. W. Ellis of Jackson, and Will Porter of Polk, who are collecting everything that can be learned of the early history of their localities. These are encouraging indications, and there are abundant reasons to believe that the county histories of the future will be a great advance upon the most that have gone before.

THE DEATH OF DR. FREDERICK LLOYD.

This sad event occurred at Iowa City, April 2, 1899. He was born in London, England, May 24, 1826. During his childhood his father, who had served many years in the Brit-

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